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ABSTRACT

This document consists of the final two issues of a newsletter that addresses aspects of adult English-as-a-Second-Language literacy education. Articles on the following topics are included: (1) student-centered literacy materials; (2) a Rhode Island literacy program; (3) professional involvement in adult literacy programs; (4) a modern phonetic description of the American English vowel system; (5) literacy in developing countries; and (6) teachers learning from students. Book reviews, and announcements of publications, tests, and meetings are also included. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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ESL ADULT LITERACY

BULLETIN, MAY, 1989, VOL. 3: NO. 1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Student Centered Literacy Materials - Melanie O'Hare 1
Report from Rhode Island - Janet Isserlis 2
Review of Kazemek (Susan Lawson) 3
Long and Short Vowels???? - Jack Wigfield 4
The NYS Place Test: Sample Literacy questions 6
Announcements 6
Addendum - Room 6 News 8

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STUDENT-CENTERED LITERACY MATERIALS

The premise underlying the materials developed by Janet Isserlis and Linda Mrowicki is that effective literacy materials are meaningful and personally interesting. Their presentation at the 1989 TESOL Conference in San Antonio, Texas, was brimming with practical ideas.

The presenters described five categories of materials and gave suggestions for activities at three levels within each category. "Level One develops sight word recognition; Level Two emphasizes sentence comprehension and develops the connection between print and oral langauge, and Level Three emphasizes obtaining new information." The categories were (l) photos/ slides of the students' community (2) printed community materials (3) in-class photos (4) dialogue journals and (5) class newspapers. This article will briefly describe each category with a detailed description of categories one and five.

Photos and slides of the students' community are "real, contextualized, highly visible, frequent, and help to expand the class content beyond the classroom." Isserlis and Mrowicki suggest having students participate in the photo selecting or taking whenever possible. Street and pedestrian signs can be shown, discussed, and read in class. Students can be taught to scan for key words and to use context and guessing strategies. Level One procedure would include pointing out, saying, repeating, and copying the target words. Level Two would include eliciting student responses to "What does the sign say?" and "What else do you see?", transcribing student utterances on to the blackboard, and using the passage for reading practice. Level Three would mirror Level Two except that students would write freely to describe the slide.

Printed community materials include bus schedules, store ads, junk mail, signs, and notices. The materials are easily accessible to students, and they should be encouraged to bring to class those materials which they need to know about.

In-class photos are taken with a polaroid to produce instant material for generating writing or, using film which has to be developed, students write a list of the photos as they are taken and then use this as a reference list for writing about the developed pictures. A photo "book" might be generated by gathering some of their papers with a photo and their text. The example given was of photos of 2 shoes, 3 tables, 4 feet which might comprise a book called Numbers.

Dialogue journals provide a means for

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student-teacher or student -student communicative writing exchanges. These journals are not corrected for grammar and spelling mistakes because the purpose is to communicate in writing in a non-threatening form. Students write 3 or 4 sentences about themselves; the teacher (or another student) responds and poses questions and the student responds to the teacher's entry. The journals provide a useful resource for devising materials for individualization.

Class newspapers "reflect students' own experiences in their own words, build a community through a sharing of information, are embedded in a shared and common context, and develop reading skills at a variety of levels." The news items are generated through the LEA (Language Experience Approach) and items are recorded on large sheets of newsprint as students report them. These items are corrected for grammar and spelling, and then the news is typed (once a week) on to a single sheet. Photos, illustrations, and graphics may be included. Isserlis includes a calendar and a weather report as regular features because students will develop a familiarity with the format which enables them to "engage in predictive reading patterns." Activities such as word counts, sentence completions and interactive questions might also be included particularly on 'slow' news days. Students read the newspaper silently, read it aloud in pairs or small groups, complete the activities collaboratively or individually, ask questions about and use the information in the paper. Two samples of Janet Isserlis' Room 6 News can be found in the addendum.

For further information about the topic of student-centered literacy materials, Isserlis and Mrowicki can be contacted at the following addresses: Janet Isserlis, Literacy Project, International Institute of Rhode Island, 375 Broad Street, Providence, RI 02906. Linda Mrowicki, Box 1545, Palatine, IL 60078. (**MELANIE O'HARE**, Alemany Community College Center, San Francisco.)

REPORT FROM RHODE ISLAND

The Literacy/English as a Second Language Program at the International Institute of Rhode Island began operation in February, 1988. During the first six months of the program, staff worked to research knowledge that has been acquired in the field of literacy for non-native speakers of English and to explore methods of literacy instruction and teacher training which would prove effective in serving students and teachers in the International Institute's and other Rhode Island adult educational programs.

The staff of the Literacy Program has recently completed its needs assessment document. The needs analysis defines literacy as one of several educational and life needs of the target population (non-native speakers of English). It enumerates the barriers to access to educational services for those learners for whom lack of literacy skills precludes study in mainstream ESL courses presuming literacy as an existing skill.

Drawing on input from educational and social service providers, students in existing ESL programs and non-native speakers of English not enrolled in programs, program staff identified needs for 3 learner and 3 provider groups. (Learner groups comprise pre-literate learners, mainstream ESL learners and potential learners not enrolled in formal instruction. Provider groups include educational staff at IIRI, educational providers at other agencies and the community at large.) The needs of all six groups were subdivided into six major categories: programmatic, situational, attitudinal, interactive, cognitive, and metacognitive.

Staff worked to include as many people as possible in the assessment process. Through a series of individual interviews, meetings and other sessions, conducted over the course of two months, raw data was compiled. Narratives were written and fed back to informants to confirm and clarify discussions held during the interview process. Finally, a grid was devised to facilitate an overall understanding of various findings and their implications for the program and its goals. Goals and objectives were then derived from that grid

and the program is now (November, 1988, ed.) in its second phase of implementing some preliminary goals and objectives.

Although the needs assessment is not exhaustive, it has provided staff with valuable insight into current literacy needs as perceived by a wide range of people. Further, staff involved in other IIRI programs continue to participate in the ongoing dialog pertaining to assessing and evaluating learners' needs. Given that the Literacy Program staff propose a collaborative model for classroom instruction as well as for teacher training, we invite response to our assessment methods as well as to our findings. We hope that an examination of our process might facilitate the work of others with similar concerns. A copy of the needs assessment narrative and grid can be obtained by sending a self-addressed envelope to: Literacy Program, International Institute of RI, 375 Broad Street, Providence, RI 02907. Readers wishing more detailed information are invited to write or call us at (401) 831-1460. (**JANET ISSERLIS**, Literacy Program, International Institute of Rhode Island, Inc.)

Summary of "NECESSARY CHANGES" by Francis E. Kazemek

(This is a summary of Francis E. Kazemek. "Necessary Changes: Professional Involvement in Adult Literacy Programs". Harvard Educational Review, Vol 58:No 4, Nov. 1988.)

"I got this little theory, an utterly unimportant theory, that most people never know more than vaguely where they are, either in time or in the scheme of things. People can't read contracts or time schedules or identify countries on blank maps. Why should they? I don't know. There's a wonderful fraudulence to literacy. Yet these same people have emotional lives as intricate as that Bach piece my niece played" (Jim Harrison, Sundog, 1984, p. 89)

Dr. Kazemek states that "Much of adult literacy education is based upon misconceived notions of literacy, inappropriate methodology, and a naivete concerning political and social realities..." He bemoans the fact that literacy professionals have not been able to translate (research) knowledge into effective practice...and "adult literacy professionals must begin to take immediate and specific actions to change the shape and direction of adult literacy in the U.S."

He says there is a false assumption that adults learning to read and write have the same needs as children. He points out that adult literacy classes employ teacher controlled, didactic methods usually identified with basal reading, management programs, and large-group instruction. Reading tests based on reading lists of isolated words ignore findings that reading is a holistic and transactional process rather than a mechanistic acquisition of isolated skills. "When methods, materials, and testing procedures designed for children are used with adults, they foster the perception of adult beginning readers and writers...as incompetent adults whose language needs and abilities are more like those of 8 year-olds than like their legitimate peers."

Dr. Kazemek quotes Guthrie and Kirsch, 1982, and Heath, 1980, saying that "literacy is a relative phenomenon, one that is both personal and social: it occurs in different contexts, situational as well as cultural; it depends upon the reader's and the writer's purposes and aims for engaging in literacy acts, and it varies according to the nature of the text. In contrast, the narrow view of literacy that governs adult literacy program practices is dangerously ethnocentric; it ignores the social backgrounds, needs, and purposes of adult learners."

The number of adults who cannot read or write has been estimated from 27 to 60 million. Clearly there is a need, but not adequate funding to prepare professionals to do the job that even the most caring of volunteers cannot do.

Harvey Graff (1987) is quoted as arguing that historically speaking, literacy has not led to improved economic conditions, social betterment, or democratization. Rather, increased levels of literacy have been the result of major and often dramatic

changes in society's political and economic structure.

Kazemek challenges the big number of illiterates and feels that literacy professionals should also go to mass media to publicize the contention of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) that "there is no single point above or below which people can be declared literate or illiterate." He sums up the problem as "not only how to counter distorted information with reasonable reliable data, but also how to...make a strong case for adequately funded and staffed adult literacy programs based upon solid information concerning the nature of literacy and its social, political and ethical dimensions."

Once active in Project Literacy U.S. (Plus), Kazemek has left it, feeling it perpetuates the classic blaming of the victim; illiterates were continually cited as being responsible for our present economic problems and for our inability to compete in the global market place.

Literacy is constrained by social and cultural practices and is not merely a private accomplishment. Community based programs that address the broad needs of adults have a 65% to 70% completion rate, contrasted to the 25% to 50% for more traditional programs. Small learning circles rely heavily on such activities as discussion, writing and sharing journals, writing and reading language experience texts, reading with the assistance of a partner, modeling by instuctor and peers, and group rereading of various texts. Group members would be empowered by learning different roles. The instructor would assist group members to attain goals and objectives that THEY have chosen, individually and as group members.

Placement tests which underscore the adults weaknesses rather than strengths should be replaced with something like an informal interview between the adult and instructor concerning mutual expectations, a discussion of the adult's reading needs and interests, perceptions of the reading process, and perhaps some activity such as label reading and supportive oral reading and/or retelling.

Stable funding from federal and state governments is a must and professionals should lobby wherever they can for this. In the meantime, we should utilize the best of the research to make our literacy programs learner-based. (**SUSAN LAWSON**, Alemany Community College Center, San Francisco)

LONG AND SHORT VOWELS?????

(Abstract:This article presents a modern phonetic description of American English vowels on the basis of "long" and "short". Unlike most phonics classifications, the vowel in "fat/fad" measured "long". Initial consonants have no effect on vowels. Final consonants did affect vowel length. All vowels were longer before voiced final consonants. For teaching reading, it is suggested that the labels "long" and "short" be dropped (1) because they stress quantity instead of quality, (2) because, by ignoring the effect of final consonants, they are misleading, (3) because they wrongly classify one vowel, and (4) because in their traditional phonics use, they neglect to account for several vowels.)

Phonics is the study of speech sounds as represented by written letters for the purpose of teaching reading. Good phonics, if that isn't an oxymoron, is built on good phonetics. How much of the phonetics behind modern phonics is accurate? Compare these two quotes:

"[In English] the vowels have a long and short sound or quantity; and the different quantities are represented by different letters. Thus: Long "a" in "late" when shortened, is expressed by "e", as in "let". That the sounds of "a" in "late", and "e" in "let" are only a modification of the same vowel, may be easily understood by attending to the manner of forming the sounds; for in both words, the aperture of the mouth and the configuration of the organs are the same. This circumstance proves the sameness of the sound or vowel in the two words, though differing in time or quantity." (from Noah Webster's American Spelling Book, 1783.)

Now this one:

"English vowels divide into two groups: short vowels and long vowels...You will notice that the short vowels are not only shorter (in the time it takes to utter them) but also more lax than the long vowels. (Lax sounds are made with speech muscles more relaxed.) Long vowels are not only longer but usually diphthongized

to some extent. That is they actually consist of two vowel sounds." (Fred Brengelman, Understanding Words: Systematic Spelling and Vocabulary Building, 1980.)

Professor Brengelman's short vowels are those in bit, bet, but, not, put. His long vowels are those in beat, bait, bite, boat, boot, butte. He leaves unclassified the vowels in boy, bout, bought, bird.

Nearly 200 years separate these two quotes, but how close are either to what modern phoneticians have discovered about English vowels?

Ilse Lehiste, a phonetician currently at Ohio State University, analyzed English vowels in the monograph Acoustical Characteristics of Selected English Consonants, International Journal of American Linguistics, Publication 34 of the Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics, Vol.30: No 3, July, 1964. Before analyzing the consonants, Lehiste studied the vowels "in such words as beat, bit, bait, bet, bat, but, cot, caught, boat, put, boot, bite, bout, boil, and bird." The speakers represented the states of Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa and included 3 engineers, 1 psychologist, and 2 linguists. "The informants produced a set of test words, recorded in a constant frame chosen so that the test words were produced with primary sentence stress at the peak of the intonation contour." The recordings were made under optimum conditions at the Communication Sciences Laboratory of the University of Michigan. 1613 tape-recorded utterances were analyzed. Broadband and narrow band spectrograms were produced at Michigan and Stockholm.

"The durations of all syllable nuclei were measured and the influence of preceding and following consonants on the duration of the nuclei was established." Lehiste found that the influence of initial consonants was negligible but **the voicing of final consonants made a great difference.** To find what Lehiste calls the "intrinsic duration" she averaged the duration between words ending in voiced and voiceless consonants.

While Lehiste found a major division between long and short vowels, the situation is somewhat more complex than long versus short. All the short nuclei were found "to contain a single steady state." The long vowels, however, were divided between simple (a single steady state like the short nuclei) and complex. The complex nuclei consist of two subdivisions. (1)Those with an initial single steady state followed by a long glide as a second element. (2)Those with two steady state positions. Set (2) was considered phonetically diphthongs.

In summary, Lehiste found this:

Short nuclei: bit, bet, but, put
Long nuclei:
(1) Simple: beat, bat, pot, bought, boot
(2) Complex:
Single-steady state (glided): bait, boat, Burt
Double-steady-state (diphthongs): bite, bout, boil

It is understandable that Webster's analysis in 1787 would be inaccurate. He mistook vowel quantity for vowel quality. Lehiste could provide him with spectrograms that show a different wave form, a different formant structure among the vowels. She could also show him that his "long" vowel in "late" is shorter than his "short" vowel in "led".

But Brengelman in 1980 is out of step with Lehiste's work as well and that is less understandable. First he fails to include all the vowels in his long/short classification. Secondly, he uses the term "lax" inaccurately. It has nothing to do with muscle tenseness. Lehiste redefines the "traditional" lax/tense difference between "bit" and "beat" as one of duration of the target vowel and duration of the movement away from the target vowel to the following consonant. Thirdly, he classifies the vowel in "bat" as short while Lehiste's measurements show it to be long. Fourthly, all long vowels are not diphthongized. Lehiste shows 5 long vowels with simple steady state nuclei. And of the long vowels that do show complex structures, 3 are glided and 3 are diphthongs.

What does all this mean for literacy teachers? First and foremost, let us **drop the classification of long and short**. Long and short should be used to describe and not classify. That is, we should not be put

in the position of telling our students that the vowel in "fate" is a short long vowel and the vowel in "fad" is a long short vowel. Lehiste pointed out the difference that voiced final consonants make in length. She averaged her measurements to get her "intrinsic" duration. But ESL students can't do that. They must be helped to hear and produce those differences. Many of my students who have come to me from the long/short tradition pronounce "feet" with a long duration of the "ee". There is research to show that when they do this, native speakers hear the word as "feed". And in turn, when they pronounce the vowel in "kid" with an extremely short duration, it is interpreted as "kit" by native speakers. Once again we are battling labels that interfere with production. For those of you who are now asking, "But what should I call them?" let me ask you, "What do you label the vowel in 'caught'? What do text book writers label the vowel in "caught"? Isn't it "other"? Is that a help? The solution is not to label them anything. Teach by example and contrast.

These arguments are more important in ESL than in native language literacy because our students are influenced by labels. Native-speaking literacy students don't care what you label vowels. They ignore the label. They can hear a difference between "feet" and "fit" with no difficulty. ESL students often can't, and they rightfully think of a label as a description which it often isn't. So our first task in teaching pronunciation, certainly, and also in teaching literacy with a phonics approach is to teach them to hear and produce differences but **mainly differences of quality** ("feet" versus "fit") **and those differences in environment that cause misinterpretations** (long vowel in "kid" and short vowel in "kit") **and finally, those differences dealing with simple versus complex** ("fat" versus "fate") **and glided versus diphthongized** ("boat" versus "bout").

If that doesn't make sense to phonics adherents, then, since Lehiste's data show there is a long/short difference, they should make sure to classify correctly and put the vowel of "hat" with the long vowels and furthermore they should now include the often neglected "other" vowels, like the vowel in "caught", in its proper category, simple long. (**JACK WIGFIELD**, Alemany Community College Center, San Francisco)

THE NYS ("NICE") PLACE TEST

On April 7, 1988, we received more information about the New York State Education Department's ESL placement test which includes a literacy section. We were sent a draft of the administrator's manual with some sample questions. The test is administered orally to one student at a time. These are the sample questions in the Basic English Literacy Screening section given after a short oral (except for write your name) scored warm up session:

1. [Teacher] points to the numbers. "Please read these numbers." (5 9 28 743)
2. [Teacher] points to the letters. "Read these letters." (D M L F H T)
3. [Teacher] points to the words. "Read these words." (in pull stop phone danger)
4. [Teacher] points to the question. "Read this question." (Do you like to read English?)

Each correct answer is given a score of 1.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The **TESOL Summer Institute** will be held at San Francisco State University this summer. Two important people in literacy, **Shirley Brice Health** and **Wayne Haverson** are on the faculty. Wayne Haverson will teach "Training for Literacy in ESL". Shirley Brice Heath will teach "Teacher Research in Secondary School". For further information write: Professor James Kohn, San Francisco State University, English Department, Attn: James Kohn, 1600 Holloway Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94132.

Peggy Lewis has sent us a notice of a **USC Literacy Roundtable Second Annual Adult Literacy Colloquium**, Saturday, May 27, 1989. The theme is THEORY TO PRAC-

TICE; PRACTICE TO THEORY. For more information contact Peggy Lewis or Genevieve Patthey, Literacy Roundtable, Jef 141 MC-1294, University of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA 90089-1294.

Marty Egan of UC-Berkeley Extension Division has arranged for **Pia Moriarity** (co-author with Cindy Henderson of The Henderson-Moriarty ESL/Literacy Placement Test, The Alemany Press, 1982. ane now a doctoral candidate at Stanford) to give a course in ESL adult literacy for the 1990 spring semester.

The **Educational Testing Service (ETS)** Pasadena Field Offie has been awarded a contract by the California State Department of Education to study the characteristics of exemplary adult literacy programs in California. The first phase which began in December, 1988, was to identify potential exemplary programs. We have written both ETS and the State Department of Education to keep us up to date on the progress of what should be an important study.

Are you interested in work-place literacy programs? Rock Valley College in Illinois has a project to recruit, provide tutoring, and offer classes for ESL for students at their place of employment. The private companies provide all tuition, classroom space, textbooks, and, in some cases, work release time. Eighty six students are involved. For more information contact: The Clearinghouse on Adult Education, Room 4428, Switzer Building, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20202-7240.

Joyce Fowlkes Campbell's ESL Notes from the U.S. Department of Education, Division of Adult Education informs us that the **BEST Test** (Basic English Skills Test) has been updated. The Center for Applied Linguistics has charge of the test which now has an expanded Manual and revised scoring sheets. The Manual now includes sections on scoring procedures, interpreting the results, and an extensive section on the statistical characteristics associated with the test. For further information or a free sample packet write: BEST Program Director, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037

For a number of reasons, not the least of which was that Susan Lawson went to Kenya to train Peace Corps volunteers for two months, we failed to produce a bulletin for November, 1988. We're back in gear, however, and have lined up a lead article by **Lynellyn D. Long**, co-author of IN PRINT for the coming November issue.

If you would like the November bulletin, please send a 45 cent stamped business sized envelope to **SUSAN LAWSON-Literacy, Alemany Community College Center, 750 Eddy Street, San Francisco, CA 94109.**

ESL Adult Literacy is edited by Carole Glanzer, Susan Lawson, and Jack Wigfield. This issue was printed through the help of Peggy Doherty, Acting Director of Alemany Community College Center.

★ ★ ★ ★ ROOM 6 NEWS ★ ★ ★ ★

NUMBER THIRTY-FOUR LITERACY CENTER- International Institute of Rhode Island, Inc. WEEK OF MARCH 13-16, 1989

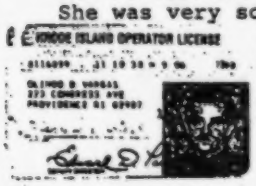
NEW STUDENT NEWS!

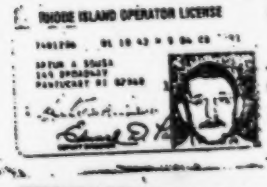
Vat Kong and Pa Koua Vang joined our class this week. We hope they enjoy studying with us.
Pa Koua came on Monday.
Vat Kong came on Tuesday.
Pa Koua said, " I am a new student coming to learn English in here. I enjoy to meet everybody in the class-room. Also we learn to read, to write and to talk. I hope that someday we will speak English better than now."

We hope that PaKoua and Kong enjoy studying with us in Room 6. Welcome to the class.

Sandy's news

On Wednesday, Sandy had her second driving lesson. She was very scared. When she went home, she felt dizzy and nervous. Maybe next month Sandy will have her drivers' license.





Do you have a drivers' license?

Who has a license is Room 6?

More car news:

Saphya's car sounds like a motor-cycle. Frank went to the parking lot to check it out. Frank thinks it's the muffler. Saphya doesn't know. Arthur said after school, he'll look at the car to see what's wrong.

CALENDAR

March 1989

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Literacy Center International Institute of Rhode Island, Inc.

Please circle the days we study this week.

Last Thursday was Diana and Olindo's 20th anniversary. What was the date last Thursday?

Congratulations, Diana and Olindo

Olindo is going to be a bachelor this week because Diana is going to New York. Diana will stay in New York for 5 days. Olindo and his daughter will cook. Arthur likes to cook, too. Arthur cooks Portuguese food -- fish, steak, soup. He cooks all different kinds of food.

PIZZA PARTY - Friday morning 3/17 $1

AMNESTY MEETING

Arthur's sister, Aida, said there's a meeting at school on Wednesday mroning. A lot of people will come. Arthur wanted to go after 9 o'clock to help the people get ready for the meeting. The meeting is about Amnesty

How many times did you read 'at' in this week's news? _____

Please circle 'at'.

This month is _____

Next month will be _____

ESL ADULT LITERACY

VOL. 3: NO.2, November, 1989

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LITERACY IN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE-Lynellyn Long 1
LEARNING FROM STUDENTS- Ann Whiteside 4
INCIDENTS OF TEACHER LEARNING-Jun Kobashigawa 5
TEACHING MULTILEVEL CLASSES IN ESL by Jill Bell (Susan Lawson) 6
LETTER NAMES, NEW RESEARCH- (Jack Wigfield) 6
OUR FINAL NEWSLETTER (EDITORS) 7
LATE INFORMATION 8

LITERACY IN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

The school was a long rectangular concrete building with a tin roof that housed two classrooms. The doors leading to each classroom had lost their locks and swung in the wind. Long grass grew up around the school to the windows except for a small field of dirt where at noon young boys played ball against the walls. The school officially opened from September to June. During those months, children from ages four to twenty studied in two hour shifts, sixty in each classroom. They studied eleven subjects, including English, for an average of 140 hours a year. Usually the teachers came, but when their government checks did not arrive, they stayed home to plant their gardens. Floods, famine, strikes, family obligations, and other acts of God often kept the school closed. The typical student was a young boy who dropped out after two years to help his family in the fields or migrated to find work in the capitol.

This description is based on my fieldnotes from an educational mission with the U.S. Agency for International Development in Bangladesh. These notes, I have subsequently learned from other educational missions, could as well describe many rural schools in SubSahel Africa and other poor countries in the so-called "Third World". Although most countries in the world have mandated universal primary schooling, illiteracy rates remain high (one in four persons is illiterate) and the absolute number of nonliterates is growing.

During the 1960's and 1970's, school enrollments in Third World countries tripled from 100 to 300 million. Public expenditures for education also grew. In the 1980's, primary enrollments continued to expand, but did not offset the high birth rates of many Third World countries. The absolute numbers of children out of school continued to grow and the overall rate of illiteracy increased. With the mounting debt of many Third World economies, governments also began cutting back on public services. Children and their parents, particularly those in rural areas, who have little voice in political decisions about spending priorities, have been the losers.

For the past decade, internationally as well as domestically, literacy has taken a back seat on the political agenda. Although the rhetoric of many policy makers implies that they recognize the long-term importance of literacy, funding priorities suggest otherwise. In its 1990 Request to Congress, A.I.D. alloted only 1.6% for basic education of its total projected develop-

ment assistance to the region. (The Education and Human Resources account worldwide is projected to be 11.6% of total Development Assistance. Development Assistance, however, is only 12% of U.S. international affairs appropriations). In 1984, the U.S. also withdrew from UNESCO, the UN organization that funded most literacy activities internationally. Although the withdrawal was over representation and management issues, the U.S. action symbolized the status of literacy programs in the foreign policy arena. Had UNESCO covered economic and security issues, one might ask whether our Government would have been more willing to negotiate its differences with the organization.

At the same time, literacy programs have not numbered among the notable successes in international development. As one policy maker explained, "Education--those nonformal programs we used to fund in the late 60's and early 70's were a black hole. You could keep pouring money down them and literacy rates did not get any better". With the advent of the Development Fund for Africa, Congress increasingly demands that foreign assistance programs demonstrate concretely how they contribute to promoting economic growth and development. From this perspective, literacy programs--whose benefits are more long-term--are considered a luxury.

As the Bangladesh example suggests, there are also serious problems with the quality and efficiency of many formal educational systems. Poor quality contributes to high illiteracy and drop out rates. In many of the poorest Third World nations, the majority of children do not complete primary school. At independence, many Third World nations also inherited colonial educational systems, which were designed to produce a small, educated elite to staff government bureaucracies. The curricula based on former French or British exam systems is largely irrelevant to the skills needed for employment in an agrarian economy or a growing urban informal sector. With cutbacks, many school systems cannot afford rennovations on classroom buildings. Public schooling also becomes a subsidy for the middle and upper classes, because the urban and rural poor cannot afford the costs associated with schooling. While nonformal literacy programs are often better positioned to meet the needs of the poor, are cheaper, and are of better quality and efficiency, they lack the organization or funding to handle large numbers of people.

Donors have trouble justifying financing educational programs of poor quality and efficiency particularly when--as in the case of the U.S.--the foreign aid budget is being cut. At the same time, cutbacks signal to ministries that education is not a development priority. Where foreign assistance represents a large part of a country's development account, such shifts in funding can be significant.

As the state of education and literacy programs in the Third World suffers, many bilateral and international organizations are recognizing the negative impacts of illiteracy on other development priorities. In the early 1980's, UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) pioneered a "Child Survival Revolution" to promote oral rehydration and immunizations in the Third World. Although the child survival initiative has dramatically decreased infant mortality rates in many countries, UNICEF increasingly recognizes the importance of promoting female literacy--i.e. educating mothers--to sustain these interventions. Improved female literacy has been shown to correlate with better health and nutrition practices, decreased infant mortality rates, and better sanitation practices. Female literacy also has intergenerational effects: better educated mothers have better educated children. Literacy for both sexes correlates with increases in agricultural productivity and social rates of return.

Recognizing that improving literacy impacts development in general, four U.N. organizations--UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, and the World BAnk--have called for a global "Education for All" initiative to put basic education (defined as education for children between 8 and 14) back again on the international agenda. They have invited participation from bilateral donors--U.S., France, Germany, Scandinavian countries, etc. The United Nations Secretariat has also declared 1990 International Literacy Year. As part of the Educational for All initiative, the UN organizations are organizing regional meetings in Africa, Asia,

North America, the Middle East, and Latin America during November and December and will sponsor a worldwide conference in Bangkok, Thailand, in March, 1990. The purpose of these meetings is to focus international attention and assistance for basic education and literacy. Although the thrust of the initiative is on improving educational access for 8-14 year olds, it will also cover out-of-school youth and illiterate adults.

Many Third World nations have set the year 2000 as a target to achieve universal literacy or vast improvements in their literacy rates. Such improvements, however, will require creative solutions. Expanding primary education systems--in effect, improving access--will not alone suffice. Many children can not afford the costs (both direct and opportunity) associated with primary schooling. Drought, endemic conflict, and nomadic lifestyles prevent many children in Third World countries from attending schools on a regular basis. Those who do attend, as suggested earlier, may drop out or graduate largely illiterate. With mounting debt, many governments lack the resources to expand school systems or to finance nonformal alternatives sufficiently while maintaining quality.

The "Education for All" initiative requires new conceptions of education and literacy programming. Alternatives to the village school--new delivery systems--should be considered. For example, technologies, such as radio and television, can be used effectively to reach people beyond the school walls. More flexible scheduling can allow children and adults the opportunity to learn after work or outside of peak productive periods. Abandoning Western life cycle assumptions about schooling to provide more life long learning opportunities will also enable people to take advantage of educational programs when they need and can afford them. Young women, in many cultures, for example, are discouraged from attending school during peak childbearing years, but they may be more free to study when their children are in school. Basic literacy training could be offered through extension programs, public health clinics, and/or in the context of on-the-job training.

Changes ae also needed within formal educational systems. In place of largely centralized bureaucracies, community input on the design of pedagogy and curriculum may ensure the school's relevancy to the larger socio-cultural and economic context. Encouraging more community participation and decentralization of educational decision making will also force educational pedagogy and practices to meet the needs and demands of the educational consumers. Finally, more creative means--such as privatization for those who can afford to pay--may help in the financing of education.

In many ways the issues are not dissimilar from those that domestic adult literacy and ESL programs face daily. Like the poor in the Third World, their participants are largely disenfranchised and have little input into the design of educational programs. They drop out or graduate with levels of literacy that do not adequately prepare them for the demands of the labor market (other than dead end jobs). The teachers are poorly paid and must find other work to supplement their earnings. Programs come and go and are the first to be cut when budget cutbacks are made. Our politicians are long on rhetoric and short on funding.

Many domestic ESL literacy programs have devised creative ways of teaching and learning in conditions of scarcity. The experiences of these programs may be useful to the larger world community. Likewise, they have experiences and models that may be relevant to us. It is useful at times to stop and look beyond our own literacy programs to the larger world from which many of our students come. That students do not have access to basic education in another part of the world may eventually impact classes here in the U.S. More importantly, domestic programs are part of the worldwide effort to eradicate illiteracy. Teaching a Mien woman to read in a refugee ESL program in Oakland or a Bengali woman in a nonformal literacy program in Bangladesh is what the Education for All initiative is all about. **(LYNELLYN D. LONG**, AAAS Diplomacy Fellow, Africa Bureau, Agency for International Development. This article presents the views of Dr. Long and not necessarily those of A.I.D. Lynel-

lyn D. Long is co-author of IN PRINT, Addison-Wesley, Menlo Park,CA, 1988. If you are interested in the "Education for All" initiative contact: Dr. Wadi D. Haddad, Executive Secretary, Inter-Agency Commission, World Conference on Education for All, UNICEF House, 3 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017.

LEARNING FROM STUDENTS

The ESL literacy classroom is an extraordinary place. Outside the classroom (melting pot or no melting pot) a turbulent, confusing sea of people of different cultures, languages and classes line up into camps, lead separate lives in separate neighborhoods rarely crossing the frontiers or getting to know one another in any other capacity than a functional one. Where else would you find an urban professional person working in a fairly intimate setting for an extended period of time with a group of mostly rural nonliterate working-class people? The classroom as sanctuary-from-the-wars-outside offers a tremendous opportunity to both teacher and student for learning not only the curricular material but some of the more "extra-curricular" material about the other side of the tracks.

Unfortunately, we often avoid such content because it is difficult, emotionally laden, conflicting. "Besides, there is always too much curriculum to cover," we say. Thus the classroom becomes a place where the teacher sets up the rules and students try to figure out how to play the teacher's game. But if learning theory teaches us anything, it is that adults learn best by integrating new material with what they already know. A teacher's first task then should be to find out what games students already play, and then to teach new games by demonstrating similarities to or differences from the former.

The importance of getting to know one's students (finding at what games they play and at what level) is not exactly news to teachers. We all try to get to know our students, to learn about their lives, problems, hopes , and dreams. But the tremendous pedagogical significance of learning about students hit me over the head last year when I was trying to teach amnesty curriculum to a group of Central American and Mexican adults. Having skipped the critical step of finding out what my students knew or thought, and having barged confidently ahead to the curriculum, I found myself whistling in the wind.

My lesson objective was to get students to identify their state on a map of the U.S. Easy, I thought. Wrong. After endless repetition I could get a conditioned response: See U.S. map, point to upper left. But consistently identify the state as CA, their state, nothing doing, as my grandmother used to say. At this point I had one of those "What is WRONG?" feelings, which I have learned through painful mistakes to attribute to poor planning on my part. (The task is too complicated. Break it down into its constituent parts.) What is a state?" I ask. Blank. "A nation? Country? City? A map?" Blank stares. "What are the departamentos in your country?" This got lots of animataed discussion. "Municipios?" Sure. "Which is smaller, a municipio or a departamento?" No idea.

Yet as the discussion progressed, I realized that people had traveled a lot, knew a lot of geography from a bus-traveler's viewpoint. One student, a former migrant farmworker, had been deported 17 times and knew the state of California like the back of his hand-- much better than I! But none of the students were familiar with the four directions, nor the requisite bird's eye view of maps. Therefore my lesson was unintelligible to them.

So we started with the sun, where it rises and sets. Then which way do you go to get back to your home country? Then we tried to draw pictures of students' home towns, pictures that a friend could use if he got lost to help him get to one's house. Then we integrated the north, south, east, west directions with the flat maps.

But the more complicated issues of city, state, country were harder to explain. Income tax, I found, was the key and immigration police. When you get deported, do you leave just CA or the U.S.? Therefore, the "Migra" works for the nation not the state. Then I enthusiastically brought up

the issue of voting. "When you become citizens, you will be able to vote for the mayor of the city, the governor of the state and the president of the country." Blank faces. "Did you vote in your country?" It turned out many did. "Why?" Well, if you don't, you don't get your ID card stamped, and then you can get in trouble. Besides, the politicians are all the same. This was news to me. Here I thought I was guiding people through our little curriculum so that they could better understand their new country as future voters. For my students, voting was something to be done only under coercion and was the absolute last thing on their minds. Now I was learning.

I won't bore you with further details on what for me was a long and unexpected journey, a bit like Alice in the rabbit hole. But the point is that without such a discovery process, our lessons are buildings without foundations. Without the conceptual groundwork, the learning simply will not stick. (**ANN WHITESIDE**-Mission Community College Center, San Francisco)

INCIDENTS OF TEACHER-LEARNING

...occurring during the first week with my first students in a literacy class with J.W.

It's difficult to describe my first encounters with real students not only because I've never taught before, but also because I have already tossed out all the generalizations about students and learning processes that are necessary to ESL literature and teacher training programs. Based on teaching experiences, these statements are certainly valid and do allow teachers to talk to each other. But the application of a generalization to these students in this class would have to be made so specifically and conditionally that the statement would seem to lose its value as a description of even one student.

So I decided to trust that the students, being responsible for their learning, would reveal their individual communication problems and thus show how I could help them. But it was immediately obvious that each incident of miscommunication seemed very wide and very deep, involving many factors larger than language alone:

For example:

(1) T: What's your name?
S: ?
T: My name is Jun. What's your name?
S: ?
T: The teacher's name is Jack(pointing). What's your name?
S: ?
T: ?

(2) S: (Marks both X MALE X FEMALE)
T: ??? What are you, man or woman?
S: Man.
T: Correct!
S: ...woman...six children.
T: !!! Correct!

(3) T: (Pronounces) Fair.
S: (Writes F)
T: (Sees HAIR in lesson. Covers the H with his finger)
S: (Sees only IR from where she is sitting. Writes FIR)
T: (Pronounces) Fir. (Then) Fair.
S: ????
T: !!! (Uses a small flat ruler instead of his fat finger from then on.)

Communication gaps are necessary for the student to learn across. Why else should they learn? So perhaps, these gaps are also necessary for the teacher to learn from and to teach across. The new teacher should learn to read each student and understand what is involved in each miscommunication before she or he can teach effectively across it. Just as we expect the student to learn to communicate by experiencing the language and the classroom, "little by little, day by day", so, hopefully, the new teacher will learn to teach by experiencing the students. (**JUN KOBASHIGAWA,** fulfilling a practice teaching requirement for a certificate in ESL under the UC-Berkeley Extension Division.)

POSTSCRIPT

Ann Whiteside's and Jun Kobashigawa's articles came to us while we were reading

Jane Hansen's When Writers Read (Heinemann:Portsmouth, NH, 1987). Hansen's book deals with children. It relates her transition from a more "traditional" teacher-teaching, to a teacher who starts with the child learning. All three of these teachers from beginner, Jun, to more advanced teachers, Ann and Jane, have done the same thing--turned to the student from the start.

Hansen's book is also in direct opposition to Walsh, Price, and Gillingham's letter name research. Hansen starts her children with writing and invented spelling. Letter naming she feels gets in the way of focusing on meaning. It takes away the emphasis on sound/letter correlations which is more important than letter naming. Allowing invented spelling leads to standard spelling in a self discovery, creative way. First-draft spelling like "WEN RAN KUMS DAN IT DANS IS IN THU PUDLS AND SPLAZI IN THU IR..." (When rain comes down, it dances in the puddles and splashes in the air...) doesn't bother Hansen any more than early drawings, do; drawings, for example, of a person which may show a head propped up on two sticks.

All this writing activity leads to reading and the class library with books that children chose on their own is well used and discussed.

Is there research to support all this? Hansen is a PhD from the University of Minnesota. But compare her bibliography with Walsh, Price, and Gillingham's and you will see very quickly that each draws from a separate reservoir of reading research.)[**THE EDITORS**]

TEACHING MULTILEVEL CLASSES IN ESL BY JILL BELL

(Teaching Multilevel Classes in ESL, Jill Bell. Dormac, Inc., P.O. Box 270459, San Diego, CA 92128-0983.)

As most teachers can tell you, ANY class is a multilevel class, but some classes are more multilevel than others. It is for these others that this book is written. Bell includes possible reasons for this multilevel grouping, mostly budgetary, but the meat of the book for teachers is the pragmatic suggestions of what to do with these students so as not to overwhelm them or waste their time. She even lists advantages, pointing out not having to follow a rigid syllabus, the richness of a variety of cultures, and the help beginners can have from the more advanced students.

Bell suggests a theme curriculum, based on student-generated topics. She devotes a chapter to showing how to have the students assess their own needs for English.

Thorough planning and preparation must be a given for the multilevel classroom teacher whose class can not move in lockstep. Whole group activities promote class unity. Small equal ability groups allow students to work at their own speed.

For the literacy students, Bell suggests having them create a word search puzzle from vocabulary words from the theme lesson. The meaning of these words would have been explained in the context of the reading in the whole group so the more advanced could help the beginners with their meaning. Bell gives examples of classsroom polls with the lower level student recording only YES or NO to the questions while the upper levels work with more difficult structures. One of the most useful teaching tools for the multilevel classroom is the teacher's collection of self-access material. These are exercises arranged by levels so the student can do the work by himself and check it himself. Students working on these materials allow the classroom teacher to move around and give individual help.

The overall tone of the book is empathy and confidence that the teacher facing a multilevel class can rise to the challenge. This book would be a useful tool for those teachers. (**SUSAN LAWSON**, Alemany Community College Center)

LETTER NAMES-NEW RESEARCH

Walsh, Daniel J., Gary Glen Price, Mark G. Gillingham. "The Critical But Transitory Importance of Letter Naming". Reading Research Quarterly. 23 (1988), p. 108.

Have you read Venezky's "Curious Role of

Letter Names in Readng Instruction"? Or E. B. Huey (1908)? Or even Horace Mann in 18whatever, who coined the word "phonics" to emphasize letter/sound? Have you ever had an adult student read for you, come to an unfamiliar word, spell it to get at the meaning and then wonder why no meaning came? Did any of this convince you that in ESL adult work, teaching letter names doesn't belong to literacy instruction; that letter names belong in aural/oral ESL as a survival skill ("Get the J streetcar." "Spell your name.") It did me, as any of you who have read these newsletters in the past can attest to. But there is new research that demands our attention.

Daniel Walsh, Gary Glen Price, and Mark G. Gillingham make the claim that "...letter naming involves processes which, if slow and awkward, obstruct the transitions through which novice readers ordinarily must pass." (Our underlining)

Everyone has agreed that letter name knowledge predicts success in reading. But Venezky, say these authors, argued that knowledge of letter names "...is NOT LOGICALLY NECESSARY for reading." (Their emphasis) Other reading specialists have argued against Venezky, but what all past researchers have failed to look at, these present researchers claim, is not only the accuracy but the facility (read: ease and speed) that children identify letters by name. And furthermore, that once learned, letter name knowledge is useless to the skilled reader. In fascinating imagery they argue: "Facility in these processes [facile letter naming] can be likened to a bridge that perhaps could be burned after crossing, but which nonetheless needs to be built before crossing."

There are key words here that are important. "Process" is one. "By vesting the symbols (letters) with immediate familiarity" the process of learning to read is aided. "Being able to label something facilitates storing information about it in long term memory." (Gibson) "...letter names give children nameable referents with which to associate phonemes" (Ehri) "When a child correctly names a letter, assorted underlying processes have been successfully orchestrated. And when this is done quickly, none of those underlying processes has been a dysfunctional, rate-limiting bottleneck."

While the authors begin by acknowledging the controversy in reading concerning top-down versus bottom-up versus it-depends-on-what-stage you-are-talking-about, their argument and list of referents seem to place them in the bottom-up position at the beginning stage for children. Perfetti appears three times in the list of referents. Smith and Goodman only once each. (Perfetti's research, if you remember, is the theoretical basis on which Mary Newton Bruner and Elaine Williams wrote their ESL adult literacy workbook, Cracking the Code, which was reviewed in an earlier newsletter and which is bottom-up.)

The bottom-up approach and the use of "must pass through" in referring to processes bothers me as someone who works with adults in ESL. Are the processes that are a must for children the same for adults? Are the musts in English the same as those in Chinese where there is no recourse to letters? While I think my literacy adults improve their pronunciation after their contact with writing and the aural/oral work associated with it, are my Yemeni Arabs who come to me with a three vowel system storing English vowel phonemes? Once again we are being asked to rely on research dealing with children and children who are native speakers. When can we expect to get these expensive, time consuming research projects to deal with second language learners, of whatever second language, and chose adults as their population?

Until we do have research with our folks, we have to make do with what we have, and if you are a bottom-upper for novices, these researchers have given you a potent argument for teaching letter names. (**JACK WIGFIELD**, Alemany Community College Center)

OUR FINAL NEWSLETTER

We recently received an announcement from the Center for Applied Linguistics that a National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education has been set up under CAL di-

rection. CAL's LERN (Literacy Education Referral Network) will deal with the literacy concerns of (l) native English-speaking adults (2) limited-English-proficient (LEP) adults (3) native English-speaking out-of-school youth (4) limited-English-proficient (LEP) youth.

Unfortunately, this is being written only with a questionnaire sent by LERN as a guide. The main announcement has gotten lost in the post-earthquake confusion. If you haven't received a questionnaire about your program and want one, or for more detailed information write: David Spener, Acquisitions Coordinator, National Clearinghouse on Literacy Education, Center for Applied Linguistics, 1118 22nd Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037.

With Pat Rigg, an early leader in ESL adult literacy, as editor of the TESOL Adult Interest Group Newsletter, and Joyce Fowlkes Campbell's ESL Notes from the U.S. Department of Education, and especially with LERN, we feel our newsletter is unnecessary. We don't know yet whether LERN will publish a newsletter, but there will certainly be access to much more information than we were able to provide. LERN's questionnaire asks for lesson plans and techniques to pass on to others. That certainly was one of the main goals of our newsletter.

We want to thank everyone who contributed to the newsletter and those who included notes of encouragment with their stamped-self-addressed envelopes. We hope the newsletter filled a need while it lasted. We are especially grateful to our administration at Alemany for its cooperation in getting it printed. (THE EDITORS: **CAROLE GLANZER, SUSAN LAWSON, JACK WIGFIELD**-Alemany Community College Center, 750 Eddy St., San Francisco, CA 94109)

LATE INFORMATION

ESL Notes just came, and we have room to mention some of the items in that very useful newsletter (Joyce Fowlkes Campbell, U.S. Department of Education and Literacy, Division of Adult Education, Mary E. Switzer Building, Room 4428, 400 Maryland Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202) One half of all Adult Basic Education participants are enrolled in ESL classes. Hispanics are the largest language group enrolled. Thirty per cent of the total adult education enrollment were limited English proficient adults.

There is yet another newsletter. The Volunteer Voice Newsletter comes from Marilyn Bentson, Tacoma Community House, Box 5107, Tacoma, WA 98405. It includes ESL teaching ideas, community resources, student stories, and cultural in formation.

We had one letter of request for our newsletter from someone teaching ESL in prison, and there is now a Federal Bureau of Prisons' task force on ESL. If you are interested, write Paola Nesmith, Education Specialist, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Prisons, 320 First Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20534.

What's News is a newspaper for young adults with limited proficiency in English (intermediate level). Teacher's guides accompany the newspaper which is published monthly. For information write Ross Beatty, Editor and Publisher, P.O. Box 21338, Washington, D. C. 20009

If you believe in literacy in the native language first and that language is Spanish, there is now a Spanish Literacy Video Program for Adults, 14 one-hour tapes covering basic literacy skills in Spanish plus a workbook. It also teaches any literacy teacher how to go about it no matter what language you are working in according to ESL Notes. A 30-minute preview tape is available for $10 from Montevideo Productions, Inc., 5460 White Oak Ave., Encino, CA 91216.

MORE LATE INFORMATION

Janet Isserlis and her group at the International Institute of Rhode Island are now publishing a newsletter which will be published quarterly. To contribute or to receive a copy write: LITERACY PROGRAM, IIRI, 375 Broad St., Providence, RI 02907

In line with the article in this issue on letter names is some research reported in the Economist by Dr. Steven Petersen of Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, Missouri, from the journal Nature. We don't have the dates of either of those two publications, but if you are interested you may be able to find them. It's sometime this year. Dr. Petersen found that the old idea that "when you see a word and speak it, several stages of processing are involved. The visual image of the letters making up the word is converted into its spoken equivalent: then the word's meaning is looked up, in a lexicon located elsewhere in the brain. Only after the meaning has been established does the brain pass the message on to the speech centres to say the word..." is wrong. He found that..."There are clearly routes straight from the visual image into the lexicon...the areas involved in reading tasks are not those in-

volved in understanding a spoken word." He has shown that "reading does not require the meaning to be looked up in the lexicon. The information [being read] can be transferred straight to the speech centres." It will be interesting to see how the pro and con phonics people handle this research. Dr. Petersen's research used "a drop of water containing a short-lived, harmlessly radioactive type of oxygen...injected into the bloodstream." This finds its way to the brain and then the brain is scanned while performing certain linguistic tasks. The research has implications for brain surgery as well. **(JACK WIGFIELD)**